

THE REJECTED MANUSCRIPT.

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD.

THE ten minutes past three train was due at Cantelope Corner. At Cantelope Corner the great P. and Q. Railroad Company is on time. The corporation looks upon punctuality as a duty to this fattening suburb; while the citizens thereof regard it as a sacred privilege which the corporation underestimates.

Cantelope Corner should not be confounded with Cantelope Heights, with Cantelope Cascade, or with Cantelope-on-the-Saint-Henry; least of all with Northwest Cantelope, the newest, and therefore the most pretentious, of all the Cantelopes. For Cantelope is old enough to aspire; it purposes to achieve distinction. In the broad sweep of all the beautiful, bountiful Boston suburbs, none cultivates such ambition. It has been whis-

pered, indeed, that Cantelope aims at nothing less than the rivalry of the Newtons.

The Cantelope Corner grocer (there was but one, and he was so dangerous an autocrat that we hasten to speak of him respectfully)—the grocer's driver stood on the back-door steps of the Queen Anne house belonging to Mr. W. H. T. Wire, vaguely understood to be "in electricity." The grocer twirled between his finger and thumb a clean new pass-book. He delayed to offer some pleasantries to the cook, of the sort popular in Cantelope kitchens, before he made known his errand; for this was not his hour for taking orders from the imposing and imperious back door known in the arcana of trade as "We-Hold-the-Wireses."

The grocer explained that he had come for the key of the house opposite, adding that his orders were twelve o'clock sharp, with a bag of flour and a few such. He mentioned incidentally that it was three now.

"Didn't they order a *barrel*?" asked the pretty cook, as she handed the new tenants' keys to the grocer. That gentleman contemptuously shook his head. If it had been a barrel, did she think he would be found "this late"?

"But I did hear at the coal-yard, on the way round, that the new folks are literary. That puts another face on it, Molly, my dear. Literary folks are darn hard up—Lord knows why, poor devils. But I never got a bad debt out of one of 'em yet."

"Shure, then," observed Molly, with an air of crushing intelligence, "the people opposite has wrote a book, for I see it on top shelf of the waste-paper cupboard in my lady's room."

"What was the name of it?" asked the grocer, with some interest, as he slipped the keys upon the pass-book string. "Was it *The Innocent Sin*? I've heard of that volume. It's very famous. If it's her that wrote *The Innocent Sin*, I don't know but I'd better change the butter before they get here."

"Noa," said clever Molly, who was quite equal to the literary situation, "I heard my folks talkin' about that to the tea table. My lady says it isn't her at all at all. This one didn't write *The Innocent Sin*. It's another woman of the same name."

"Then this butter will do," said the grocer, snapping the cover of the pass-book to. "I never heard of anything *she* wrote. She can't be of no importance. If she'd been the writer of *The Innocent Sin* it would be another matter."

The grocer drove away to deposit his poor little order in the cold and empty house. With heavy indifference he left the pass-book behind him—the first occupant of the new home. It hung on a nail by the rusted sink, and fell conspicuously open at the page which bore the too legible legend, "*Demosthenes Hathorne, to ———, Debtor.*"

The name really was Demosthenes. No trick of fiction would dare invent such an improbability, and I hasten to verify the assertion. Nay, more; the unfortunate man was baptized Aristotle

Demosthenes; but experience of life, chiefly in the form of two hundred school-boys, had elided a half of this portentous cognomen.

Mr. Hathorne had been fain to reduce his too heavy personal share of the classic, at the end of the first year which he spent in guiding the fortunes of the famous Mount Zion Academy. Nobody but the principal and his wife knew what he had suffered from the infinite capacity for the infliction of torment residing in the nature of American youth. A teacher bearing the delicious fatality of such a name was foredoomed to failure at Mount Zion. Aristotle Demosthenes Hathorne, after enduring for four years the wittiest cartoons, paragraphs, caricatures, and serenades that had distinguished New England academy life in his day, resigned his first name and his position.

He had not been a very successful principal for other reasons, no one knew quite why; not even his trustees, who accepted his resignation without undue protest, and engaged a Reverend Mr. J. Smith to fill the vacancy with no perceptible delay.

The disappointed man, at the age of forty-two cast adrift to begin the world anew, tossed about Boston for a time in one of those wretched interludes of fate which professional people know too well, and which no others can understand. He waited for invitations which did not come. He listened for "calls" which he never heard. He applied for positions which had engaged the other man the day before. He snatched at chances which slipped through his shaking fingers. He lay in wait for opportunities which turned and fled at the sight of his gaunt and anxious face. He was a shy man, and that did not help him. It used to be said at Mount Zion—after he resigned—that he was not quite up to the times in his methods of teaching. He had the physique of the sensitive and the conservative. He was a belated scholar, an old-time student without modern "go." He ought to have been the pastor of a colonial parish, or the scholastic of a mediæval controversy. He was lost in the New England scramble for a salary. He was a vellum volume out of print. He was a mistake in life's recitation. He was an anachronism.

There were two children—and the wife

—and they had come to desperate straits. It was over a year since the salary stopped, and all her pretty expedients and brave inventions had come to an end with the little store which she had proudly saved from her own earnings for a day like this. In her heart she had always expected it some time. She had the practical sense of the two, although she did write poetry and love-stories; and when, one day, he had the chance to take two Latin School boys to tutor at reduced rates, she gently persuaded him to do so. He went to his first lesson with hanging head, and a look about the mouth so pitious that she cried all the morning. But he went.

On the strength of this prospect, and of another which they did not talk much about, and by the immediate means of the very little legacy which fell to her from her father's desultory estate, they had rented this house in Cantelope Corner. Her father had been a literary man too; he seldom saved, and often lost; he did not understand business; it did not run in the family to be rich.

They came on the ten minutes past three train, that November afternoon, as they had planned. They came alone. They had hired their boarding-house keeper to take the children for a couple of days, till the house could be warmed and put into habitable shape.

"We'll make the most of our freedom," she said to her husband, laughing nervously as tired-out women do. "It's quite like a honey-moon, isn't it?" He glanced at the parcels that encumbered her; at the fat shawl-strap bundle (it held his winter overcoat and the children's) which she lugged along, while he carried the valise; at her faded gray "spring and fall" pongee dress; at the much-mended fingers of her old kid gloves; at the portly and expensive pile of packing-boxes marked D. H., which the baggage-master was smashing about on the platform with running commentaries not of a sacred nature.

"Ye-es," said Demosthenes Hathorne. "Yes, my dear. Quite like it."

He felt at that moment as he had sometimes done on other occasions in his life, that he was deficient in imagination when compared with his wife.

"I'll stop at the post-office," she said, irrelevantly. "and you go up with the baggage, won't you? You are very tired.

Here, dear. You get into the coach with the bundles. I'll see to everything."

He obeyed her mechanically; then recollected himself, and backed out of the muddy coach, knocking off his tall hat as he did so.

"You must ride," he urged, contritely. "You must have—ah—become wearied yourself."

"He can go on the baggage wagon," observed the driver of that vehicle, with an accent of good-natured patronage. "You do look beat out, both of you. Folks generally do, that come here—the first time."

Cantelope Corner is still so rural that a new-comer is an object of interest, while it is yet so urban that its hackmen are liable to have a grammar-school or even a high-school education, and are not expected to double their negatives. Mrs. Hathorne noticed both these little facts, with the quick eye of one whose occupation has accustomed her to take running notes of the most unpromising situations, as she jolted off in the coach with the fat shawl-strap, which jounced from her knees to the seat opposite, and back again, like a passenger who had lost his balance.

"It is a town with a country heart, out here," she thought. But she was restless and disappointed about the post-office. She wanted to ask the coachman to stop. She was afraid he would charge an extra fare, and meekly abandoned the idea.

She was used to going without; it had become a second nature now.

Her first nature was quite another matter. She thought of it sometimes, but not often; she did not dare. They are the few and the blessed among us who dare dwell on that bright wraith who began life with us, and whom we used to call I. There seems to be a kind of antagonism between that lost dreamer and the toiler who has ousted it. Let be. Do not bring them too near each other. The children cry. The door-bell rings. The customer calls. Here are the quarter's bills.

Mary Hathorne had married her scholar for love of him, with her big blue eyes wide open; but they were the eyes of a girl who had never had to count a carriage fare, or wear dyed dresses, or go without a popular book. She had never heard the price of roast beef. She had never dressed in a cold room on winter mornings. She had all the new maga-

zines; for her father brought them home. She had bought her gloves by the dozen.

Poverty she had read about. Poverty—with the assurance of ignorance and youth—she had written about; for she began to send little things to her father's paper when she was quite a girl; but personal poverty, biting, blinding poverty, such as comes to the rich in mind and spirit, the kind of poverty which holds a delicately reared, finely organized creature sheer over the precipice of cold and hunger and pauperism—of this she knew no more than she did of the Simian vocabulary, or the amusements of a London slum.

She had trained herself not to think much, or often, now, of her father's home. (There had been one of those large salaries which stop when the managing editor does, and which are responsible for the habits of ease that have no backers in accumulation or inheritance.) Sometimes now, on a dark morning, she would wake and put out her hand instinctively to find the electric bell, and ring for Kathleen to bring the hot water, and light the cannell fire in the grate; and to put her rose-lined wrapper and slippers beside the bed. Then she would remember that she must go, shivering, and call her new maid-of-all-work, or crawl down stairs herself to shake the kitchen fire, if the old cook had "given notice," as was more likely, because of an objection to children, or a preference for cream in her coffee.

Mrs. Hathorne had been an easy, happy city girl, one of the fortunate; the motherless, only child, the adored idol.

When her father died, a year after her marriage, life had hardly begun to deceive her vigorous, hopeful heart. They had quite a comfortable home at Zion's Hill, and she explained the absence of things by saying, We are in the country.

This November afternoon, when she crawled up the steps of the pert little suburban house of seven rooms, and her husband had gone to start the furnace fire, she drew up the shades in the cold kitchen where the grocery book hung, and looked out. The sky was darkening over the Queen Anne house opposite. She glanced at the big gravel pit at the foot of the street. Then the luggage came crashing up the steps, and she wondered how she was going to unpack it all with such a back-ache, and then remembered that if

she cried she would be good for nothing. It was one of those moments when the terrible inadequacy of power to necessity overwhelms us.

"Poor papa!" she said. Only a woman will understand that irrelevant little cry. She was glad he had not lived to see how hard it all was.

Then her strong voice rang cheerfully through the empty house:

"Are the *book* boxes all right—all here? The rest are less valuable. Dear! Come up and see how beautifully everything has come through. . . . Oh, it is better than boarding!" She turned, when the expressmen had left them alone, and clung to him in a wave of passionate tenderness.

"Oh, it is a *home*. Dear, don't worry. We will keep it. I will work. We will work—when we get settled. And there is my new book. You *shall* have meat enough, and all the new reviews!"

She managed to slip away from him that evening, as, with soft feminine obstinacy, she had meant to, all along. There was no kerosene. They needed tacks. There was nothing for his breakfast.

"And you are so tired. There, dear! I will run to the stores."

"I *am* tired," acceded the teacher, sinking heavily upon the cheap lounge which he had drawn up beside the register. He let her go—she smiled to think how easily, as she hurried down in the windy November night, as straight to the post-office as her aching feet could carry her.

With fire on her white cheeks, and breath panting through her delicate lips, she snatched the evening mail from the postmaster. Her agitation attracted the attention of the postmaster's sister, who watched her as she tore open the only letter addressed to herself. She sat down in the show-window (the post-office had been built for a shoe store) and read the letter, which ran:

"*Mrs. M. L. Hathorne:*

"DEAR MRS. HATHORNE,—We are in receipt of your MS. entitled 'Love's Daily Bread.' We should have acknowledged it some weeks ago, but in the pressure of business it has been overlooked. We beg to say that we will give it our consideration at our earliest convenience. We hope that it may prove as satisfactory as the novel which we had the

pleasure of publishing for you some years since. We regret to say that the excellent sales of *A Platonic Friendship* have come to a practical end. We hope that the tale which we have in hand will prove to be of a more permanent interest to the public.

We are, madam, yours very truly,
 BIND AND BLOW, Publishers."

Mary Hathorne had stumbled upon what is called literary success as softly and with as much surprise as she stumbled now, for very exhaustion, upon a rolling pebble in the concrete sidewalk. She had written a book, and people had read it. That was all she knew about it. Editors had fought upon it, women had cried over it, and men smoked over it; libraries took twenty copies of it; her dearest poet wrote to her about it, and her most dreaded critic recognized her for it—all these facts had puzzled as much as they pleased her. She was too modest, too naïve, too spontaneous a woman to analyze or to train herself. She had written the book as naturally as she had fallen in love. She had accepted her success as simply as she sang to her babies. It had been a dizzy experience, short-lived and intoxicating. She was, in brief, one of too many American writers who are the victims, not the masters, of what we call fame; who are caught to the clouds and dashed to the ground on the whirl of the same tornado. She was a "one-book author." She had flashed and puffed out. She was threatened with the fate that meets the gift which has no sustaining power. She knew by instinct—for she had genius enough to possess fine instincts—that her new book would not move easily. But she had not expected as much suspense and delay as if she were a new author.

"And oh, we need the money—we need it so!" she cried.

For the proceeds of *A Platonic Friendship* were gone long ago: she had, in fact, sold her copyright for a trifling sum. Yet she had really expected her new novel to make them comfortable for a while. A chilly doubt was sinking into some quicksand in her mind. She was not used to being slighted by publishers. She tore the letter of Messrs. Bind and Blow into twenty pieces. Her husband need not see it. He seemed to be asleep on the lounge when she got in; by-and-

by he turned, and asked if she had the tacks. No mention was made of the publisher's letter. If there were good news, she would have run up the steps, and dashed in to tell him. He knew, before her footfall turned the corner. But it was not necessary to say anything. Had he not let her go to the post-office on purpose? No matter what she thought of him for doing so. He rolled over on the lounge like a lazy brute, while his heart was wrung for her. He knew that he spared her something harder to her than an aching back or blistered feet. He had begun already to deceive her in this matter with the divine deceit of love.

"I can't go to bed yet," she said at half past ten o'clock. "You'd better go. The mattresses are warm enough now, and we cannot work any more to-night. I must sit up awhile over those proofs which came this morning. There are twelve galleys—a double lot. They should have caught the return mail."

These were the proof-sheets of a little Sunday-school book, written over a year ago to meet a doctor's bill. The book had been paid for on receipt of the manuscript; it had not gone to press until this time.

Now proof-sheets, as none but their slaves and victims know, easily take high rank in that class of inanimate things which is possessed of the Evil. The essentially modern imagination might call them the electric cars of the literary profession. Without regard to life or limb, they roll crashing into that margin of existence which is reserved for other human exactions. They lie in wait for one's hour of maddening pre-engagement. They lurk, watching for one's direst emergency. They select the confusing occasions of public amusement, and are well known to prefer a houseful of company. They delight to hit the eve of a journey. They meet the exhausted traveller at the door of his hotel. In the house of his friend he becometh a hermit, and sitteth solitary, correcting his galleys in the face of the offended host, who is a recent acquaintance, and impressed with the bad manners of the literary class.

The proof-sheet delights to detain one from the reception given in honor of the author. It pursues one to the foot of the lecture platform, and to the pulpit stairs. It loveth Christmas eve and house-clean-

ing. It aims even at the wedding-day. It haunts the sick-room. It shows a ghoulis interest in the crises of bereavement. I have repeatedly known it to pursue funerals, and to call the mourner from the coffin, or meet him as he returns from the grave. On such timely and welcome occasions the printer's brief command, "*Return immediately*," stares in the face the unfortunate who has vainly hoped for the freedom of an hour of sorrow or of joy.

Therefore, when her proof-sheets must needs select her moving-day to add their fire to her whirling brain, poor little Mrs. Hathorne felt no undue surprise. It did indeed occur to her that if she had been a washer-woman her day's work would have been done by this time, possibly even been deferred or omitted in view of the circumstances. But this white-handed daughter of toil was a patient little woman, and more accustomed to do her work than to complain of it. She sat till midnight, then crawled up and threw herself on the bed in her clothes. She was too exhausted to undress, and Aristotle Demosthenes Hathorne was too sound asleep to know it.

The children came out when the house got warm, and life in Cantelope "set in," as we say of a snow-storm. They were pretty, pleasant children enough; gentle and shy, and not inhumanly noisy—scholars' children; easily amused with picture-books, and accustomed not to play auction or tally-ho while their parents read and wrote. But they had the defects of their temperaments; being sensitive, they were not strong; they were ailing a good deal; the autumn was cold; the boy had the croup, and so on; and their mother did not get to work, as she had hoped, upon her novelette for the *Pacific*. It would have made them all quite easy for the winter if it could have been finished; and then if it had been paid for in advance.

"I seem to be too tired to write," she said, apologetically, when her husband came home, gloomy and bitter, from his two cheap pupils and told her that one of them was about to prefer a Harvard tutor; being the son of a lime-contractor, who thought Mr. Hathorne behind the times.

"I am sorry I can't seem to be stronger and get at it. We must depend upon my book this year. Never mind, dear!"

"You say that every time," he muttered. "You'd say 'Never mind, dear,' if we were ordered to Siberia, or providing a dinner for the Spartan's fox."

His soft dark eyes filled. He looked at her with the adoring hunger of a man who is cheated by fate out of his natural right to protect from toil and responsibility the woman whom he loves. Then he went up stairs and locked his study door.

She listened for a few moments to his heavy footfall, nervously pacing overhead and shaking the thin floor.

"Come, Popsy! Come, Boy!" she called merrily to the children. "Come down to the post-office and get a good-luck letter!"

This nervous journey to the post-office had become both the open and the secret occupation of her restless days. A singular silence had fallen upon the house of Messrs. Bind and Blow. When before had the author of *A Platonic Friendship* been kept waiting by a publisher? The book should have been in press by this time. The "good-luck letter" did not come.

"I fink it's nuffin but Sandy Close or a Bible story," confided Boy to Popsy, with masculine and modern scepticism as to the occult.

"Oh, Boy!" rebuked Popsy, on a high moral throat tone. "Ve Bible came."

"I fought a man to-day, mamma," observed Boy, as he cantered to the post-office. "It was ve grocer-man; I pitched into him, I bet you!"

"Dear me, Boy! Why in the world should you fight the grocer?"

"Cause I was engaged to his little sister, who sits on ve cart," explained Boy, serenely. "She said Tennyson was a bigger writer van you, mamma. So I broke ve engagement. I *couldn't* fight a girl, you know. So I fought ve grocer. She's nuffin but a step-sister, anyhow."

"Mamma! Has you' good-luck letter come? Mamma!"

"Run home, Popsy," she said, faintly. "Run on, Boy. I'll overtake you."

She sank down on the show-window. The office was empty. The sun streamed in all over the steam-heated, suffocating room. Mrs. Hathorne slowly opened the letter of Messrs. Bind and Blow. Her fingers shook so that the postmaster's sister could see them. Her eyes dashed over the words:

".... We regret to be obliged to decline the publication of your novel, 'Love's Daily Bread.' We have submitted the MSS. to three of our best readers, which accounts for our delay in forwarding to you the result of our consideration. There is a diversity of opinion among them, but the odds are against the wisdom of our undertaking the work at the present time. It does not present itself to the judgment of the house as possessing the popular qualities of your former book; and we fear that its publication would disappoint both yourself and us.

"Hoping to receive from you at some future time a novel calculated to maintain the enviable literary reputation which you have already acquired, we are, dear madam, yours very truly,

BIND AND BLOW."

The children came trotting back for her, she staid so long; and the post-master's sister asked her if she didn't feel a little faint.

"Don't arx her, Boy," whispered Popsy, with the quick intuition of a little woman. "Don't arx mamma for luck letters to-day. It isn't coming till an-over mail."

When she got home her husband met her. His thin jaws worked unsteadily. He came down the steps and helped her in. "He knows," she thought. "He sees. I need not tell him."

Neither said anything to the other about the manuscript; and dusk came on. She left her last domestic experiment, hopefully imported at extra wages from Cantelope-on-the-Saint-Henry, to provide such a supper as the gods might decree, and went away up stairs alone.

She looked at her drawn face with a fierce resentment that she was not made of tougher fibre.

"You ought to be too proud to cry, you poor gray-haired thing!" she sobbed. She tossed her things about to find a pink ribbon that brightened up her worn black "afternoon dress"; she added a bit of fine lace and an antique bracelet that her father gave her. She had a grim notion of making herself gay, so nobody should notice that she had been crying. Searching for a fresh handkerchief (on such trifles hangs our fate), she opened her husband's bureau drawer by mistake.

There, face down upon his collars and cuffs, lay a fat brown parcel. She turn-

ed it over. It was the manuscript of "Love's Daily Bread." It had come by express while she was at the post-office; and Mr. Hathorne had hidden it, like the poor masculine ostrich that he was, with stupid, blundering, precious tenderness, that she might not know, till he could get up courage to tell her.

It was days before either of them mentioned the matter. But when she went down to tea in the pink ribbon and antique bracelet, carrying herself in her poor dress as no woman can but one who has once known the ease and the manner of the world, the disappointed author went up to her unsuccessful scholar and put both arms around his thin neck.

"Never mind, dear," she said; "never mind!"

"Oh, I shall secure more pupils, without a doubt," he answered, quickly. He thought himself a tactician of a high order.

The history of that first winter in the hired house at Cantelope Corner was the history of a manuscript.

Doubtless the neighboring Cantelopers bore their share of the universal human struggle; but sometimes it seemed, by comparison, an easy share. How fared it with the clerk, the carpenter, the baker, and the electrician in the Queen Anne house? Not one of them but knew more of daily creature comfort and less of harrowing anxiety than our two students; who, if they suspected the truth, that the grocer at their back door went to a better dinner and a warmer house than theirs, never admitted it, even to each other. The house of the electrician came to seem to them by bitter contrast a place of degree. They had been so used to the standards by which professional people judge of society that it was a moral shock to them to find themselves "looking up," as the phrase goes, to a man who ordered his coal by the dozen tons, and assaulted the English in which he addressed the expressman who brought out his game dinners from the town markets.

"Wire has offered me a place in his what-you-may-call-it," said the ex-principal of Mount Zion Academy one day, with an ironical smile. "He has taken the notion that he would like a 'professor' attached to his concern. He suggested it on the 8.10 train yesterday, in everybody's hearing."

"You declined, of course!" The daughter of Boston's distinguished literary editor lifted her head. She was a sensible little woman, but the scorn of "trade" was in her blood.

"I—that is—I waived the question," replied Demosthenes Hathorne, with a haggard look. "I have one pupil left."

"And I, my book!" she cried, hotly. "I have sent it off again. It *must* be printed! I shall keep on sending it—till I die."

She was sitting by the window in the full light of their only sunny room when she spoke; and he looked at her closely. It occurred to him for the first time that she did not look as well as usual; but, being an instructed man, he reasoned that the impression was probably the result of a sub-conscious cerebration, acting automatically upon the brain cells by the conduit of her last three words. This explanation was quite satisfactory to him.

Now it chanced that a week from that day she found herself too tired to go for the evening mail, and he somewhat reluctantly took the pathetic little walk upon which both of them had come to look with a kind of misery not to be understood in Cantelope Corner. The grocer and the electrician were spared that subtle anguish. The postmaster and the expressman, unconscious agents in the fate of the author who was outliving her popularity, looked upon the tragedy of that higher, sadder lot with the perplexity of beings from another world.

"Mummer's deaded," announced Poppy, calmly, when her father came home with the mail that night. The little girl was engaged in pouring the contents of the syrup jug upon the face of her mother, who lay unconscious upon the rude lounge.

It happened to be one of those interregna so common in country and suburban life, to be most succinctly described by the two, and the too familiar, words, "No girl." There had been guests to lunch as a matter of course—one of the Mount Zion faculty, and Boston ladies. Our friends could not wholly escape, even in Cantelope, the fate of the refined poor. They must meet the demands of cultivated society upon less than the income of a good mechanic.

This delicate woman, who had scarcely had a broom in her hands till she was

married, had dropped, after the dishes were "done," in an attempt to mop the kitchen floor.

Demosthenes Hathorne was frightened. He looked vacantly about the womanless house, then sent, for the love of Heaven, to his nearest uneducated neighbor. Molly the cook ran over with the heartiest, prettiest Irish sympathy in the world, and between them they got the poor lady to bed.

In the bustle consequent upon this incident, Mrs. Hathorne did not ask her husband, nor did he tell her, whether he had heard from the manuscript of "Love's Daily Bread." He put away the letter, which was hidden against his throbbing heart; he tucked it between the leaves of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Her book had been, somewhat curtly, refused.

When she came to herself she sent the story out again courageously enough. She had begun to expect it back by this time. They now fell into the way of avoiding the subject altogether. Neither asked, "Haven't Scowl and Critic acknowledged the manuscript yet?" Neither said, "Have you tried Vellum and Volume's Sons, as you meant to?" She ceased to haunt the post-office. She winced when the expressman drove down the north side of their little street.

One bright morning, when Messrs. Frisky and Flourish had returned the book, with the objection that it was too "earnest" for their trade, Mary Hathorne stoutly put on her bonnet and rather a thick veil, and went in to Boston by the next train, bearing a rising determination in her heavy heart and the rejected manuscript in her trembling hand.

She went straight to the private office of that prince of American publishers, who will be remembered longer for his great, good heart, and for his exquisite courtesy to timid and troubled authors, than he will for the high quality of the success which gave him his unique position in the advancement of American literature.

Her courage was born of her despair. She had never dared to approach him before. Her own publishers, selected with her natural timidity and in youth, had been but second-rate folk; and of the firms that had rebuffed her since, not one presumed to compete with the distinguished house to which, at last, so to speak, she crawled.

"I will never try again," she said, as she tottered into the elevator.

The publisher glanced at her card. "You do me honor, madam," he said, with that high-bred but wholly human manner of his. "*A Platonic Friendship* deserved the success it met. I shall examine your book with sympathy. . . . I knew your father," he added, gently.

The tears started behind her thick veil; she choked like a school-girl sending in a prize essay. In her effort to control her emotions her veil dropped, and his deep-set, observant gaze rested upon her sunken face. She had a beautiful face.

"That is a dying woman," thought the man of fine eyes.

"I have been — discouraged," she breathed, impulsively.

Then, like the unworldly being that she was, half child, half woman, she dashed headlong, and told him the whole story.

"I may as well take my manuscript back now," she gasped. "You won't want it—now I have told."

She held out her shaking hand.

But he who was wisest of the wise in the mysterious laws that govern the great freshets of public taste and whim—the great publisher shook his gray head, and snapped the lock of his awful safe upon "Love's Daily Bread."

"Dear Mrs. Hathorne," he said, firmly, "I do not conduct my house according to the judgments of other publishers. You are tired out, I see, and disheartened, as you say. You forget that, while it is not uncommon for a popular author to meet apparent failure after a first success, there sometimes comes what athletes call a second wind. Whatever happens, you may feel sure that your manuscript will have been read by a friend to your best possibilities and to yourself. Even if this book should fail—what of that? You have a dozen better in the brain that conceived your first novel. Take heart. Believe in yourself—for the public believes in you; and so do I."

"She needs roast beef—and cream—and a nurse for the children," he thought, with swift compassion, as he watched the color dash her deathly face.

The grocer left his cart standing where it was, and ran over to Mr. We-Hold-the-Wires' Queen Anne back door. He ran fast, and entered breathless.

"Molly! Molly, my dear! Hurry over to Hathorne's for the Lord's sake; and maybe Mrs. Wire would go; they need women there! She's taken very dangerous, and nobody to home but the young ones and that Tom-fool of a Swede, who can't speak a word of Christian English, from Northwest Cantelope. And do be quick about it!"

It was hours, it was days, it was years, for aught she could have told them, when she lifted her conscious eyes to their watching faces.

"Kathleen!" she breathed.

She thought she was in her father's house. But it was not Kathleen. Irish Molly was there, crying as the women of her race cry from the bubbling sympathy of their kind and easy hearts. Mrs. W. H. T. Wire was there, so gently and so deftly serving this stricken neighbor that one would never think to ask whether her husband had been to college. And then there was a doctor, from Cantelope Cascade. A voice somewhere spoke of "such an excellent nurse."

"Hasn't my husband come home from Boston yet?" asked Mary Hathorne, feebly.

Then she perceived that arms held her, and that they were his. Great burning tears fell on her face.

"Oh, Thene," she said, "it will give you such a headache!"

She did not say anything more then; she did not ask about the baby; and it was not till the next day that they told her that the little creature—born long before it was expected—had breathed and cried and died.

She did not express any sorrow, but only said to her husband: "I'm afraid I wasn't quite strong enough to take care of it. And how could we have sent another through college?"

Midwinter sank heavily into the windy climate of Cantelope Corner. Do the best they might, the house was cold. She could not leave her room, and indeed she showed no inclination to do so.

"I shall be better next week," she said. But next week she was not any better. She did not talk much, even to her husband. But he could see that anxiety did a deadly work upon her. It was the mortal anxiety of a woman who has borne the heavy end of life for her beloved so long, and so bravely, that death

appeared to her like the return of the universe to chaos.

"Boy must go to Harvard, you know," she said one day. "I don't see how it is ever going to be done—without me," she added, in a dull voice. But when he tried to answer her, she stopped his trembling lips with her little, shrunken fingers, and sank away into a weak sleep.

She talked affectionately of Irish Molly now and then. "Give her some of my clothes. I have one or two dresses left that she would be willing to wear. And then there is dear Mrs. Wire. I never understood such sorts of people before. She has done things so—so delicately. I wish you could find some way to repay our obligation."

Then he plucked up courage to tell her that he had accepted the position in W. H. T. Wire and Co. He hoped to cancel any obligation they were under by serving the science of electricity, as represented in that particular firm, with the honor and the intelligence of an educated gentleman.

"I will give him more than my salary's worth!" he said, proudly. "It is only on trial," he pleaded. "I haven't committed myself for more than six months. And I've about concluded, Mary, that if a man can't do one thing, it is no disgrace to him to do another. Besides, the fact is, my darling, I have parted with my last pupil."

"Oh, never mind!" she sighed, with the phantom of her old smile.

All this while she had never alluded to her book. She had not once asked him if he brought anything for her from the evening mail. Into a silence as deep as that other silence down which she was sinking, she dropped the subject of "Love's Daily Bread" forever.

"It has been rejected," she told herself quite plainly, "and he can't bear to tell me."

Only once she said to him: "My work is over, Thene, don't you see? My day is done. I've run my race, and I'm not fashionable any more. I don't suppose I write after the new style. And I haven't been very strong, you know. And oh, we've had such a hard pull!"

The tears did not start in her dry, bright eyes. She looked on, over his head, out of the window, at the cold sky that overhung the gravel pits. She did not seem to see him. The children ran in and

called her, kissing and laughing, but she responded vaguely to them.

He felt at the bottom of his heart that she was so worn out, she needed rest so much, that she was not altogether sorry to die. He perceived that she was not making the full fight. And yet, God knew! she loved him. But she was sinking for lack of a stimulant which he could not give. Already the awful distance of death seemed to have crept in between the husband and the wife.

"Kiss me on my cheek, dear," she said. "Don't keep away the air. Oh, I've tried—to do my share—to help along. But it isn't easy doing . . . so many things. Don't let Popsy take to writing."

Popsy and Boy went to the morning mail, for their father had gone in on the early train; it was his first day's work in the service of W. H. T. Wire and Co. It wrung his heart so to leave her from eight o'clock till five, that he forgot that it was otherwise afflicting to "go into trade."

So Popsy and Boy went to the mail. The nurse and the Swede remained in the house. It was a sunny day.

The children cantered down and trotted back. She lay idly on the lounge, vaguely looking over at the Queen Anne house, and did not see the little things when they ran down the northern sidewalk. They rushed, and bounded in.

Popsy carried the papers, and Boy hugged the letters to his breast. There were several of them, and she looked them over idly; two from Mount Zion, for Mr. Hathorne; a bill; another bill; a receipt; a few pages of pretty feminine sympathy for herself from a Beacon Street friend; last in the pile, a letter in a strange hand. The envelope bore the crest of the great publishing house, to whose threshold she had crept with the rejected manuscript which she had threatened to send somewhere "till she died."

She did not show any emotion now. She felt too near the real world to be shaken by the phantasms of this. What could happen? What could matter now? The book had been refused weeks ago. The great publisher was sorry that she was dying, perhaps. He would say some kindly thing—for her father's sake. She cut the letter slowly, with a little pearl

letter-opener which the children gave her on Christmas.

A folded paper dropped from it, which fell to the floor. She read the letter leisurely.

"My dear Mrs. Hathorne," so it ran, "I owe you an apology for my delay in writing. A somewhat serious illness must be my excuse. Being now quite well again, I have myself read your novel, '*Love's Daily Bread*,' and shall take much pleasure in publishing the same. I regard it as a story of a high order, and a great advance upon your first. I shall be happy to publish it upon the usual ten per cent. royalty. But I am so confident of its success that I take the liberty of enclosing our check for a sum in advance, which, I hope, you may feel an interest in receiving, as a test of our faith in the book. When your profits upon the sales shall have reached the limit of this sum, your royalty upon all subsequent sales will begin. If these terms are agreeable to yourself, we will send contracts to that effect for your signature, and put the book to press at once.

"I anticipate for the novel a rousing sale. *You have found your second wind*. I predict for the book a literary success which will inspire you to write us a dozen more.

I am, dear Mrs. Hathorne,
Yours sincerely,

— — — — —."

"Mummer," said Popsy, severely, "You've drowped a good-luck letter. Boy was making a canny cupio of it. I took it away, for he don't know any better; 'n' now he's playing cut his froat wiv you' Christmas letter-scutter."

The child put the folded paper into her mother's transparent hand. It was a check for one thousand dollars.

She took her first walk to the post-office one divine spring day, and the children cantered on before. Hope had done its hearty work. The wine of success sprang to her head and bounded in her veins. Care fled, and death followed the footsteps of care.

What a day! The early suburban robins and blue-jays swooped upon the lightning-rod of the rented house, and swayed away, chattering and trilling joyously. The very sunshine seemed to say:

"Well again! Well again!" Even the quartz in the gravel pits glittered like something precious.

The Queen Anne house opposite was all alive with neighborly interest. Mrs. Wire came down the steps and offered her a glass of wine, and Molly ran out bareheaded and over the street, and gave the convalescent lady a good hug before everybody, for she said she couldn't help it.

Then the expressman drove up, and said how glad he was to see her out again. And the postmaster's sister said she was quite a stranger, and welcome back! But the grocer stopped his cart, and lifted her in, and took her home, for he said she wasn't fit to walk it. He was definitely deferential, and asked her how she liked the butter. He talked about *Love's Daily Bread*. He said there was a piece about it in the *Cantelope Weekly Telephone*. He said he heard it was a bigger thing than *The Innocent Sin*. In the course of the little journey he confided to her that he hoped to marry Molly in July. And all the neighborly, pleasant place, the "town with the country heart," seemed to her to shine that day; and she felt as if her own happiness were something which had brimmed over till it flooded and filled the world.

Her husband came home by an early train. When he saw her watching for him at the window, looking like a new wife in her new cream-white gown, but leaning, pale and sweet, in her old place in her old way, the children, all faces and no bodies, like the cherubs in the pictures, cuddling behind her, he choked, and bowed his face, and blessed God; and then he ran up the steps, and caught her.

By-and-by she showed him the letter which she had kept all day. "We will read it together," she said. "I thought I'd rather wait for you."

It was the letter of the publisher who was so wise in the wiles of the world of books, and so tender in the world of the broken of spirit and of hope.

"The book is moving grandly," so he wrote. "The orders are coming in by telegraph. *Love's Daily Bread* will be the novel of the year. . . . When you are quite well, give us another."

"I wonder if I might take another?" said Demosthenes Hathorne, slowly.

He turned his wife's face to his; and if he was prouder of the kiss than he was of the book, who would blame him?